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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 1417

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ALIGNMENTS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. BANGKOK 19821 (1973); B. BANGKOK A-382 (1973)

SUMMARY: THE NLA IS A REPRESENTATIVE MICROCOSM OF THE
AWARE THAI POLICY AT THIS TIME. ALTHOUGH IT CONTAINS
A LARGE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND A MUCH
SMALLER NUMBER OF EDUCATORS, BUSINESSMEN, FORMER
POLITICIANS, AND JOURNALISTS, CLEVAGES ARE DIFFICULT TO
FIND AND THE BODY SEEMS TO BE PRIMARILY MOTIVATED BY AN
ADHERENCE TO NATIONAL UNITY. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
OFFICIALS CONSTITUTE THE BULK OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
IN THE NLA, BUT PRACTICALLY ALL OTHER MINISTRIES ARE
REPRESENTED. THE FORMER POLITICIANS AND PROFESSORS
HAVE DONE MOST OF THE TALKING WHILE THE OTHERS WATCHED.
AN IMPORTANT LEGITIMIZER OF THE SANYA GOVERNMENT AS WELL
AS OF THE CONSTITUTION THAT SANYA HAS PROMISED, THE NLA
HAS EASILY PASSED VIRTUALLY ALL THE GOVERNMENT HAS REQUIRED,
EXCEPT ONE BILL IN WHICH PERSONAL INTEREST COMBINED WITH
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GOVERNMENT PARLIAMENTARY INEXPERIENCE TO CAUSE

TEMPORARY DEFEAT. THE POLITICIANS IN THE ASSEMBLY ALSO TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO PROPOSE AND PASS A BILL FREEING THREE IMPRISONED FORMER POLITICIANS. END SUMMARY.

1. AT ITS FIRST MEETING THE NLA ELECTED JOURNALIST KUKRIT PRAMOTE AS SPEAKER, GENERAL SAMNAN PATAYAKUL, ASSISTANT COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMY, BECAME FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER IN A MOVE TAKEN AS A CONCESSION TO INCLUDE THE MILITARY IN NLA PROCEEDINGS AND AS A COMPLIMENT TO SAMNAN'S REPUTATION FOR HONESTY. THE SECOND DEPUTY SPEAKER IS PRAPHAT UAYCHAI, A JURIST OF STERLING REPUTATION. UNLIKE SAMNAN, PRAPHAT SEEMS TO BE OF CONSIDERABLE ASSISTANCE TO SPEAKER KUKRIT IN RUNNING THE FLOOR DEBATES.

2. IN DISCUSSING THE NLA, KIKRIT TOLD US THAT THE SPEAKERSHIP IS LIKE "SITTING ON THORNS. EVERYTIME YOU MOVE IT HURTS." KIKRIT CONTINUED THAT THE MOST VOCIFEROUS SPEAKERS WERE THE PROFESSORS AND THE FORMER POLITICIANS. THE FORMER BECAUSE THIS WAS THEIR FIRST CHANCE, AND THE LATTER BECAUSE THEY ARE ALREADY RUNNING FOR REELECTION.

COMPOSITION OF THE NLA

3. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. A CAREFUL LOOK AT THE LIST OF OFFICIALS IN THE NLA SHOWS THAT PRACTICALLY EVERY MINISTRY IS REPRESENTED AT LEAST TO THE DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL. FOR EXAMPLE, THE DEPUTY FINANCE MINISTER (SOMMAI HUNTRAKUL); DIRECTOR GENERAL, CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT (SANAN KETUDAT); DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, REVENUE DEPARTMENT (WIT TANTAYAKUL); AND THE DIRECTORS OF THE EXCISE DUTIES DIVISION (ARAN THAMMANO), AND TARIFF DIVISION (KAMPORN SATHIRAKUL) IN THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT, REPRESENT THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE. THE LARGEST MINISTRY, INTERIOR, HAS THE MOST REPRESENTATIVES. THESE REPRESENTATIVES ARE NOT ONLY FROM THE HIGHER LEVELS OF THE MINISTRY, BUT ALSO INCLUDE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS DOWN TO THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR LEVEL. THIS IS A REFLECTION OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

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WHICH NOMINATED THE NLA. THE NLA THUS CONTAINS A CORE OF OVER 100 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN ADDITION TO 13 POLICE OFFICERS AND 23 MILITARY OFFICERS. COINCIDENTALLY, THE PREDECESSOR NLA ALSO HAD 13 POLICE OFFICERS, BUT A GOOD MANY MORE MILITARY: 187. THIS CORE WILL PROBABLY NOT PLAY A UNITARY ROLE IN NLA BUSINESS, SINCE OTHER ACTIVISTS CAN PROBABLY INFLUENCE SELECTED GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AWAY FROM BEING A RUBBER STAMP FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

4. THE NLA MEMBERS ARE TAKING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES SERIOUSLY. A RANKING POLICE OFFICER TOLD US THAT HE AND ABOUT FORTY GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT COLLEAGUES MEET EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING TO DISCUSS LEGISLATIVE MATTERS. HE REFERRED TO THESE MEETINGS AS A WAY FOR NONPROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS TO LEARN BOTH SIDES OF AN ISSUE. HE DESCRIBED THESE MEETINGS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW VITAL ISSUES SO THAT THE GROUP CAN VOTE AS A KNOWLEDGED BLOC.

GROUPINGS

5. WITH SIX ASSEMBLY MEN THE PERENNIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FORMER POLITICAL GROUPING IN THE NLA. MOST OF THE DEMOCRAT ASSEMBLYMEN BELONG TO THE FACTION WHICH SUPPORTS SENI PRAMOTE AS PARTY HEAD, ALTHOUGH SENI IS NOT IN THE NLA. THE DEMOCRATS, BOONTHENG THONGSAWAT (264), BHICHAIRATTAKUL (224), DAMRONG LATTAPIPAT (221), NATRUDHI SUTHISONGKRAM (201), SURIN MARSDIT (169), AND YAI SAWITCHART (162), RECEIVED REPECTABLY HIGH VOTES FROM THE NATIONAL CONVENTION. THE SECOND MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY GROUPING IN THE NLA IS FROM FORMER SAHA PRACHA THAI (SPT) MEMBERS GATHERING AROUND ASSEMBLYMAN THAWIT KLINGPRATHUM (SPT RATBURI). (FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTAKACHORN AND FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIEN CREATED THE SPT AND KEPT IT ALIVE CHIEFLY THROUGH FINANCIAL SUBSIDIES TO INDIVIDUAL ASSEMBLYMEN. THE SPT HAS NO IDEOLOGICAL BASE). PROMINENT IN THAWIT'S GROUP IS SATAP SIRIKHAM (SPT FROM SAKON NAKHON). IN TALKING TO THE PRESS AND SPEAKING ON THE FLOOR OF THE ASSEMBLY, THE DEMOCRATS, THAWIT'S "SERI THAI" PARTY MEMBERS, AND OTHER FORMER POLITICIANS ARE USING THEIR NLA APPOINTMENTS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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PRE-CAMPAIGN PUBLICITY.

6. THE LARGEST GROUP OF ACADEMICIANS IN THE NLA TEACHES AT CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY (15). KASEM SUWNNAKUL, THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND THE THIRD HIGHEST VOTE GETTER, HEADS THIS GROUP WHICH INCLUDES TWELVE MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE. ANOTHER FORTY TO FIFTY NLA MEMBERS ARE GRADUATES OF THE FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY. THE SIZE OF THIS GROUP IS IN PART DUE TO THE FACT THAT THERE WERE OVER 100 CHULALONGKORN POLITICAL SCIENCE GRADUATES IN THE NOMINATING NATIONAL CONVENTION.

7. FOUR TEACHERS FROM THAMMASAT ARE IN THE NLA AS ARE EIGHT PROFESSORS REPRESENTING OTHER UNIVERSITIES. THE PROFESSORS ARE MAKING THEMSELVES HEARD, PARTICULARLY IN THE

INTERPELLATION OF MINISTERS. SPEAKER KIKRIT, HOWEVER, FEELS THAT DESPITE THEIR ACTIVISM, THE PROFESSORS WILL NOT BE MOVED TO RUN FOR PARLIAMENT IN THE APPROACHING ELECTION.

8. LAWYERS. MARUT BUNNAG, PRESIDENT OF THE LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND, HAS GATHERED A GROUP OF HIS COLLEAGUES AND IS TAKING A HIGHLY ACTIVE ROLE IN NLA AFFAIRS. MARUT GAINED THE HONOR OF PRESENTING THE FIRST PRIVATE BILL TO THE NLA. HIS GROUP IS TAKING A LONG LOOK AT THE PLETHORA OF LAWS AND DECREES OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT WITH THE VIEW OF ELIMINATING MOST OF THEM. A PRIME OBJECTIVE IS THE REPEAL OF THE NUMEROUS LAWS ISSUED UNDER MARTIAL AUTHORITY.

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9. THE OLD GUARD. ANOTHER GROUP WORTH MENTIONING IS WHAT COULD BE TERMED THE "OLD GUARD"--RETIRED CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICERS WHO PROVIDE A LINK TO THE PAST IN THE THAI HIERARCHICAL SYSTEM. THE ADVICE OF MEN LIKE PHAIROJ JAYANAMA (FORMER AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON AND GOVERNOR OF CHIANG MAI), BOON CHAROENCHAI (FORMER MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND AMBASSADOR TO PARIS), OR GENERAL LEK NAEWMALEE (PRESENTLY ADVISOR TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL) WILL CARRY SOME WEIGHT IN BEHIND-THE-

SCENES ACTIVITIES.

ALIGNMENTS AND NLA BUSINESS

10. ONE OF THE FIRST NLA DUTIES WAS TO SELECT THE MEMBERS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES WHICH ARE TO REVIEW LEGISLATION AND FACILITATE OTHER NLA FUNCTIONS. THE FINAL SELECTIONS DEMONSTRATE AN ADHERENCE TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONAL UNITY WITH THE SIMULTANEOUS PLACEMENT OF COMPETENT PEOPLE ON THE PROPER COMMITTEES. THUS, OF THE NINETEEN MEMBERS ON THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE, THIRTEEN ARE MILITARY AND ONLY SIX ARE CIVILIAN--ONE NEWSPAPERWOMAN, TWO PROFESSORS, A BUSINESSMAN, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTERIOR MINISTRY'S DEPARTMENT
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OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION, AND AN OFFICIAL FROM THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY. OTHER COMMITTEES, SUCH AS FINANCE AND AGRICULTURE, ARE SIMILARLY STAFFED PRIMARILY WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE ARA BACKGROUND IN THE SUBJECT. THERE ARE FEW COMMITTEES WHICH HAVE MORE THAN ONE FORMER ELECTED POLITICIAN. THE POLITICIANS HAVE TO WORK ON THE FLOOR, NOT THE BACK ROOM.

1. THE NLA FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IS INTERESTING BECAUSE ITS MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS OF ONE THAMMASAT, ONE RAMKHAMHAENG, AND THREE CHULALONGKORN PROFESSORS, TWO CURRENT RANKING MEMBERS OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TWO MILITARY OFFICERS, ONE FORMER POLITICIAN, A SUPREME COURT JUDGE, THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, AND AN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIST. THE COMMITTEE IS STACKED, HOWEVER, WITH "OLD GUARD" ELEMENTS SUCH AS PHAIROT JAYANAMA, BOON CHAROENCHAI, FORMER DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER MALAI HUVANAND, AND RETIRED POL. MAJOR GENERAL SANGA KITTIKACHORN, THANOM'S BROTHER. IN AN INTERESTING ANOMALY, EX-FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN AND EX-FINANCE MINISTER BUCHANA ATTAKORN ARE ON THE COMMITTEE.

NLA ACTIVITIES

12. THE NLA IS A KEY LEGITIMIZER OF THE SANYA GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT HAS THUS SOUGHT NLA APPROVAL FOR A SERIES OF MEASURES, MOSTLY REVENUE. THE JANUARY 11 MEETING, FOR EXAMPLE, PASSED A BILL AMENDING REVOLUTIONARY PARTY DECREE 53 WHICH PROHIBITED IMPORTS FROM MAINLAND CHINA. THREE EMERGENCY DECREES INCREASING TAXES ON OIL PRODUCTS PASSED 158 TO 11, WITH 76 ABSENCES. ANOTHER EMERGENCY DECREE ADJUSTING INCOME TAX COLLECTION PASSED 156 TO 4. THIS MEETING, HOWEVER, REJECTED ANOTHER EMERGENCY DECREE TO RAISE CARD REGISTRATION FEES WITH A

62 TO 77 VOTE. THIS VOTE STIRRED PRSS AND OBSERVERS TO CRITICIZE THE NLA FOR "SELFISHNESS" AND THREATENING THE STABILITY OF THE SANYA GOVERNMENT. ACTUALLY, THE ASSEMBLYMEN DEFEATED THIS MEASURE--THEY FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE SUBMITTED IT AS A DRAFT BILL RATHER THAN AN EMERGENCY DECREE. FURTHERMORE, THE UNDERSTAFFED NLA SECRETARIAT WAS UNABLE TO PREPARE A
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COMPANION BILL IN TIME, THUS GIVING THE NLA MEMBERS AN INCORRECT IMPRESSION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. THE PRESS THE PRIME MINISTER, AND THE CABINET TOOK THE REJECTION OF THE BILL AS A DEFEAT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, WHEN IN FACT IT WAS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PARLIAMENTARY INEXPERIENCE. THE MEASURE PASSED THE JANUARY 25 SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WITH A COMFORTABLE 200 TO 22 MARGIN, THUS AVOIDING FURTHER CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NLA ON THIS ISSUE.

13. THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE NLA ON JANUARY 18 PASSED A PRIVATE MEMBER BILL GIVING AMNESTY TO THE THREE FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS WHOM THE THANOM GOVERNMENT ARRESTED FOR TREASON IN THE SPRING OF 1972. OF THE FOUR BILLS SUBMITTED SEEKING AMNESTY, THE NLA VOTED ON THAT OF COLONEL SOMKID SRISANGKHOM (FORMER PARLIAMENTARIAN FROM UDORN), APPROVING IT 163 TO 57 WITH SEVEN ABSENCES. THE PRISONERS WILL BE RELEASED ONCE THE BILL IS PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE.

14. COMMENT: THE FEW NLA VOTES TAKEN SO FAR, AS WELL AS KUKRIT'S ADMINISTRATION OF THE NLA, SHOW A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNANIMITY. WHILE THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS CAN BE GROUPED BY OCCUPATION, THE PRESENT NLA HAS NOT SO FAR MANIFESTED MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION. THE PRESENT MOVERS IN THE NLA ARE REELECTED FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE PROFESSORS, BECAUSE THE OTHERS HAVE FULL TIME JOBS. ONE FOURTH OF THE MEMBERSHIP HAS NOT MADE THE FOUR MEETINGS. THE NLA WILL HANDLE ITS FIRST FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE WHEN IT PASSES ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION. ASSEMBLY DEBATES AT THAT TIME MAY HIGHLIGHT CLEAVAGES IN THE NLA THAT ARE NOT PRESENTLY APPARENT.
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